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Reburying the Dead

Returning control of ancient remains to Native American tribes

Over the past three decades, more than 1.5 million burial artifacts, 50,000 sets of human remains and 265,000 sacred objects have been returned by museums to Native American groups under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The act specifies that remains and objects must be returned to the descendants of the group to which they belonged. So, what should a museum do when a people has become extinct, as in the case of the Calusa Nation of southern Florida?

Chip Colwell, senior curator of anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS), discussed how his team resolved such dilemmas at “Let Us Rebury Our Dead: Native America’s Imperfect and Necessary Law,” a winter colloquium sponsored by the College of Law’s Center for Art, Museum & Cultural Heritage Law and the Center for Intellectual Property Law & Information Technology.



Calusa Indian Mound

Image courtesy of John Mitchell and Colette Dowell

Curators resolved the Calusa conundrum by considering the issue from the perspective of informed consent, Colwell said. The Calusa revered their dead, even posting guards to protect the shell mounds where they were buried. The DMNS decided the right thing to do was to return the Calusa remains and objects to the Miccosukee tribe, which carries on the Calusa cultural heritage.

The process is thornier when it’s impossible to link remains and artifacts with a modern-day group. It is wrong to place an extinct tribe’s remains and objects with a group whose ancestors might have been their enemies, such as the Hopi and Navajo. In

addition, some curators argue that returning unidentifiable remains and objects eliminates the opportunity for scientific study, putting the Native Americans’ history at risk.

“It’s often overlooked that NAGPRA requires return of *control* to the Native American groups, not the actual return of objects. In many cases, native peoples have chosen to have scientists continue to study artifacts,” Colwell says.

Despite the controversies and imperfections in NAGPRA, Colwell believes that the act is vital to rebuilding trust between anthropologists and native peoples: “It’s hard to have a good future relationship when you literally have skeletons in your closets.”

Communicating Climate Change

DePaul professor discusses effective ways to connect with skeptical and disengaged audiences

In 2016, National Geographic circulated a distressing image of an extremely thin polar bear dying of starvation. For years, it has been increasingly difficult for the bears to find food, due to increasing temperatures in the Arctic that melt the sea ice through which they surprise and catch their prey. While the image was widely shared on social me-

dia, it is difficult to know if it motivated people to take climate change seriously.

“Polar bears give us the idea that climate change is distant, both in distance and time. It doesn’t impact our daily lives,” explained Jill Hopke, assistant professor of journalism, at “Communicating Climate Change” last fall. This event kicked off the new multidis-

ciplinary minor in climate change science and policy offered through the College of Science and Health and the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences.

Hopke asserted that individuals are more likely to be engaged with climate change when they see it happening in their own communities. Hopke shared an audio segment from Chicago Public Media/WBEZ radio that aired in 2016 in which a Chicago woman explained how urban flooding in the Chatham neighborhood was destroying her home.

The neighborhood has some of the highest levels of flooding in Chicago.

Such stories are not what the public generally hears about climate change, but according to Hopke, climate change affects everyone.

Hopke expressed how important it is for communicators to correct misinformation about climate change by relaying factual, accurate research. She also said that weathercasters, who are among the most trusted professional journalists, can help share information about climate change.

The Great Mind of Michael Shannon

In Jeff Nichols' 2011 film "Take Shelter," a blue-collar worker and family man is haunted by a series of terrifying visions—ominous rain clouds, violent lightning storms, swarms of black birds—that he believes are signs of impending doom. As he takes increasingly desperate actions to protect his family, the other characters in the film and the audience are left wondering whether the man is losing his mind or if he really is foreseeing the apocalypse.

"Take Shelter" and its star, Michael Shannon, took center stage on Jan. 29 as part of the DePaul Humanities Center's public series "In Conversation with Great Minds." H. Peter Steeves, the director of the center, who conducted a Q&A with Shannon following a screening of the film, introduced the actor: "His measured performances are cerebral and emotive, intellectual and moving, alive in such a deep way that they don't ever amount to pretending to be alive." As proof, Steeves pointed to some of Shannon's most memorable film and television roles, including John Givings in "Revolutionary Road," federal



H. Peter Steeves, director of the DePaul Humanities Center, with actor Michael Shannon, this year's guest of the "In Conversation with Great Minds" series

agent Nelson Van Alden in "Boardwalk Empire," Bobby Andes in "Nocturnal Animals" and, most recently, Richard Strickland in "The Shape of Water."

Shannon and Steeves discussed the environmental implications conveyed in "Take Shelter" and how those issues are often ignored by the public. Shannon shared a story from his youth in which he canvassed door to door for the Illinois Public Interest Relations Group to talk about environmental policy and how most people slammed their doors in his face. "So many

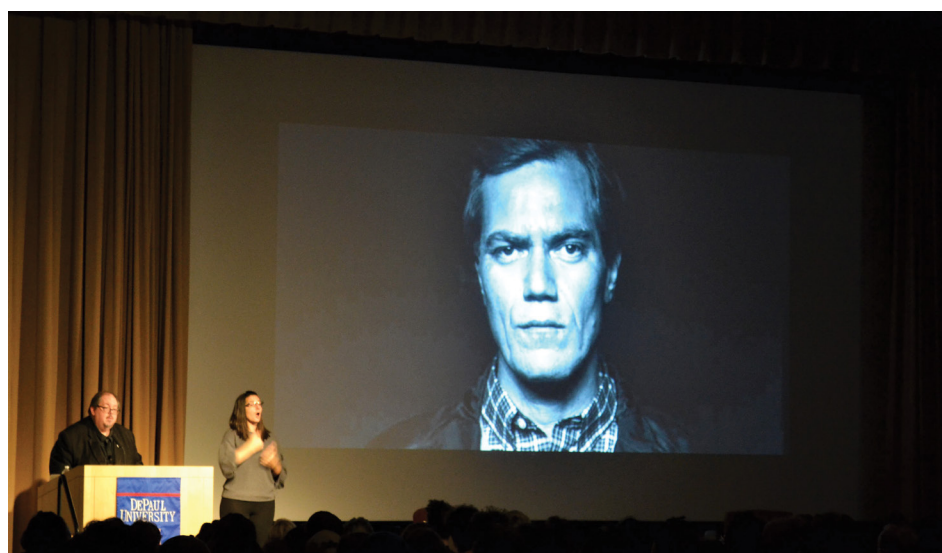
people just didn't seem to care at all or didn't believe [in climate change]," said Shannon.

Shannon mentioned carrying forward this environmental theme in a play he directed this past winter at Chicago's A Red Orchid Theatre, a company he co-founded in 1993. "Traitor," which is based on Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People," tells the story of a community dealing with lead contamination at a local school.

Steeves also asked about Shannon's complex portrayal of notorious contract killer Richard Kuklinski in Ariel Vromen's "The Iceman." According to Shannon, he did not see the film as a biopic—"I don't think we need more biopics," he said with a smirk—but rather as an examination of a complicated individual. "I was fascinated by the notion that somebody can want to love and have a family, but also be [the cause] of all of this destruction," Shannon explained.

After the discussion, Shannon answered questions from the audience and took a number of selfies with students, most of whom probably were unaware of Shannon's connection to DePaul: his father, Don Shannon, was a professor of accountancy in the Driehaus College of Business, and a memorial scholarship for undergraduates in accounting and management information systems was established in his name.

To watch a video of the Shannon and Steeves discussion, please visit bit.ly/MShannonDePaul.



Photos by Anna Vaughn Clissold